



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: July 15, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 2700 Porter Street, NW
APPLICATION: Over-height fence with a height of 7' and curb cuts

Site Information

Zone: R-5-A
Historic District: N/A
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Multi-unit apartment and condominium buildings with single-family homes in neighboring blocks to the west, with significant landscaping

Background:

The Office of Planning received this public space application for review on June 2, 2010.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Policy HP-2.5.2: Historic Landscapes (Comprehensive Plan)

Preserve the distinguishing qualities of the District's historic landscapes, both natural and designed. Protect public building and monument grounds, parks and parkway systems, government and institutional campuses, gardens, cemeteries, and other historic landscapes from deterioration and incompatible development.

Policy UD-2.2.1 Neighborhood Character and Identity

Strengthen the defining visual qualities of Washington's neighborhoods. This should be achieved in part by relating the scale of infill development, alterations, renovations and additions to existing neighborhood context.

Policy HP-2.5.4: Landscaped Yards in Public Space

Preserve the continuous and open green quality of landscaped front and side yards in public space. Take special care at historic landmarks and in historic districts to protect this public environment from intrusions, whether from excess paving, vehicular access and parking, high walls and fencing, or undue disruption of the natural contours or bermed terraces.

KEY ISSUES

The subject site is approximately 43,050 square feet and is located on Porter Street, NW. The application is for a 7' high iron fence along the perimeter of a new Embassy of China multi-unit residential building that is currently under construction. Part of the building includes high retaining walls with fences along the top and located on private property; these provide the building with some security. Although the existing public space regulations allow fences, the maximum height for fences is 42". The applicant does not provide any justification for the need to construct an over-height fence. Also the application includes three 7' high double gates that swing into public space and the adjacent sidewalk, potentially becoming an obstruction to pedestrians.

The public space plan needs to address several issues to make the streetscape more pedestrian friendly. The application includes three curb cuts that cross the sidewalk on Porter Street: two are existing and one is proposed as part of a circular driveway. The District's policies reinforce minimizing the number of vehicular and pedestrian conflicts in public space. The proposed curb cuts and driveways should be kept





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as narrow as possible. New street trees need to also be planted at the back of the sidewalk. A landscape plan has not been provided as part of this application.

Porter Street is a secondary street, but it has connections with major arterials: Connecticut Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue. The site is also located along a visually prominent entrance to Rock Creek Park, and the building restriction line along this property is meant to maintain its character as a greenway. The character of the immediate neighborhood is of multi-unit buildings and single family homes within a landscaped setting. Immediately to the west is the Cleveland Park neighborhood commercial district.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Porter Street is a secondary street that is an important gateway into Rock Creek Park from Connecticut and Wisconsin avenues. In addition, it is immediately adjacent to the extensive Rock Creek Park greenway. The existing landscaped and open character along this street should be maintained. Fences in public space or within building restriction lines should be built to 42", the maximum height allowed by regulation, an fifty percent open as a way to maintain the open landscaped character of this roadway.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the height of the fence be reduced to 42", or that the fence be relocated to the property line or building restriction line; the curb cut and driveway width meet the dimensions required by regulation; and a landscape plan be provided that includes new street trees behind the sidewalk.

